

Is Social Media Strangling an Honest Fashion Week?

By: Beth Jones

Has social media become too much? Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram are growing every day and becoming huge players in the fashion industry. Has this trend detracted from and strangled true style and honest fashion? Or, has it only benefitted us by getting the *“masses fired up about fashion, giving talented people who don't work at magazines a voice in the industry, and allowed brands to market themselves in cool and interesting ways?”*¹

During Fashion Week we observe that social media has become the “It Girl” of the shows. Eyes alone are not watching the shows themselves anymore, instead they have been replaced with the screen of a smart phone capturing images and sending out live Tweets and Instagram photos. The editors and buyers have become outnumbered by the celebrities, bloggers and social media press in the front row. Before social media, the invited had time to observe and formulate opinions of the designs coming down the runway. They would then go back to work to create and review with honest feedback their thoughts and observations. Now with the use of social media, everyone in the room is delivering a stream of communication without any real thought. Amy Odell, from *Buzzfeed*, thinks maybe it's driven by a need for self-promotion rather than actual critique, *“Meanwhile, everyone else is tweeting the exact same thing and I think a lot of us are doing it 1. so that we can announce to the world that we're there and have a good enough seat to get the photos of the outfits and 2. for shameless RT (retweets) from people who get really excited by fashion shows and lead us to more followers”.*²

Another way social media is used during fashion week is to cover street style. When this concept originally began there was honesty to the images captured by photographers like Scott Schuman³ and Garance Dore⁴. They were snapping photos of the women and men coming in and out of the shows simply dressed in the way that they wanted without thinking of anything except getting to the next show. Now, with the growth of street style and the paparazzi-like crowds of photographers waiting outside, it has become important for the attendees or “crashers” to dress in something that screams, “take my picture”. There are multiple articles published with titles resembling “Ten Rules to Getting Shot by Street Style Photographers”,⁵ with quotes like “wear designer”, “wear lipstick”, “and be thin”.

On the inside of social media is the fashion blogger, and she/he is now attending the once elite scene of fashion week. When this first began it was with the originals, like Susie Bubble, Tavi and Bryan Boy, who were sitting front row because of their unique perspective and style. Bloggers were wearing what they wanted, designers that they loved and things that were truly them. Since then, there has been a major increase in the number of bloggers flooding fashion week. They've seen what makes someone else popular in the blogosphere and in turn try to emulate that look. Everyone has the arm party of bracelets, or the bright neon skirt, or the ridiculous eye-catching

¹ <http://www.buzzfeed.com/amyodell/the-top-5-ways-social-media-has-completely-tainted>

² <http://www.buzzfeed.com/amyodell/the-top-5-ways-social-media-has-completely-tainted>

³ <http://www.thesartorialist.com>

⁴ <http://www.garancedore.fr/en/>

⁵ http://nymag.com/thecut/2011/09/street_style_rules.html#slideshow=/slideshows/2011/09/26/ten_rules_for_gettingshotbystreetstylephotographersbr.slideshow.json%7CcurrentSlide=00011

print and it all starts to look the same. Then, there is the question of how many things that they are wearing are sponsored? With brands wanting their clothes to be seen, they send pieces to the bloggers in hopes that she will be snapped by photographers and shown all over the Internet. But, is the blogger wearing the clothes because it's truly their style or because they are getting paid to prance?

As someone who is heavily involved in social media and who has made a living as a fashion blogger, I feel torn to be on both sides. I love that I have been able to be one of those who doesn't work at a magazine, but I get to share my opinions and interpretations of fashion with my audience. Pulled in the other direction, I do feel that social media has over saturated the market and caused some homogenization and lack of honest to goodness style and fashion. I need to ask questions like, "Am I doing or saying this to self-promote? Am I wearing this because it would catch the eye of a street style photographer? Am I wearing this only because I've collaborated with this brand?"

I think to truly let social media have optimum impact during fashion week, everyone involved should take a step back and apply the old saying "think before we speak", then more honest thought, art and opinions could flow through the social media channels.